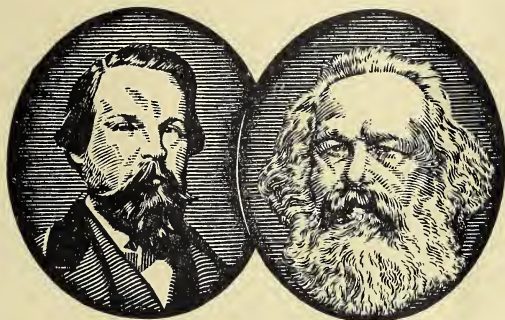


CENTENARY OF THE
Communist
Manifesto



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NO. 122

**Celebrated at the
Philharmonic Hall
Liverpool, Sunday
June 27th, 1948**

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

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COMMUNIST MANIFESTO CENTENARY

SUNDAY, JUNE 27th. 1948

at 3-0 p.m.

PHILHARMONIC HALL, LIVERPOOL

One Hundred Years Ago, in 1848, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels set out in the Communist Manifesto the first complete statement of scientific Socialism. In replacing earlier Utopian theories with a theory tested by observation of the real movement of society, they gave to the working class a compass and a guide to action in their struggle for Socialism. The century that has ensued has testified in practice to the correctness of this theory and the need for its continued application.

PROGRAMME

3-0 p.m.	Mr. Wm. Rust ...	Editor of the <i>Daily Worker</i> . E.C. Member Communist Party
3-35	Mr. R. Nettleton ...	Sec. Lancs. and Cheshire District Young Communist League
3-45	Mrs. E. Cohen ...	Women's Advisory Committee, Merseyside Area Communist Party
3-55	Merseyside Unity Theatre 1848-1948—Dramatic Re-creation of 100 years of Working Class History	
4-15	Mr. Leo McGree ...	Well-known Merseyside Working Class Leader
4-40	Mr. R. Palme Dutt ...	Editor of <i>Labour Monthly</i> . E.C. Member Communist Party
5-20	Internationale ...	Closure

In the Chair : **Mr. S. Foster**
Secretary, Merseyside Area Communist Party

1848—1948

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE ON MERSEYSIDE

PROLOGUE

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." "From the serfs of Middle Ages sprang the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burgesses the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed."

Communist Manifesto, page 2

The history of Liverpool is taken as beginning in 1207 when King John by Letters Patent encouraged serfs to come to Liverpool as free men or burghers of the city. The growth of the city and of Merseyside generally over the ensuing four centuries was slow. It took a great class struggle, the Civil War between crown, church and nobles on the one hand and yeomen-farmers, merchants and burghers on the other to set the stage for the growth of the Merseyside as a modern industrial and port area. Liverpool was to become the greatest port of British Capitalism. During the Middle Ages it had been a small port trading with Ireland and cut off from Lancashire by extensive marshes, but in the 18th Century it became the greatest slave-trading port in the world. Slave-trading and privateering against French rivals for world trade laid the foundations of many private fortunes of Liverpool's merchant bourgeoisie in Liverpool's first great period of expansion. During this first great period also the working men of Liverpool began to organise and the Liverpool Shipwrights built up a powerful union in the latter half of the 18th Century.

EARLY CAPITALISM AND CHARTISM

"Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the 'industrial capitalist' . . . but with the development of the industry the proletariat not only increases in numbers ; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more . . . Thereupon the workers begin to form combinations (Trade Unions) against the bourgeois ; they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages ; they found permanent associations in order to make provision beforehand for these occasional revolts . . . our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses this distinctive feature ; It has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeois and proletarians."

Communist Manifesto, page 8

The slave traffic was abolished in 1806. The resultant gap in Liverpool's trade was soon more than filled up by the ever-increasing volume of exports and imports created by Lancashire's rapidly expanding textile industry. With the industrial revolution we enter the period of large-scale manufacture and the growing struggle between the workers and the capitalists by the passing in 1800 of the anti-combination laws. These laws were nominally directed against all combinations or associations, whether of masters or men. In practice, however, the masters combined

with impunity. The whole force of the law was turned against the workers who attempted to combine in defence of their living conditions. Nevertheless the workers of Lancashire and all over England persistently defied the law and carried on organised struggles against the masters. In 1823 a strike of Liverpool ropemakers was unsuccessfully prosecuted under the anti-combination laws. In the next year, when giving evidence before the Committee on Artisans and Machinery, Mr. Roger Fisher, a Liverpool shipbuilder had to confess that "the working classes were too systematic in their combinations." The findings of this Committee coming on top of a long widespread struggle against the infamous anti-trade Union laws led to their repeal and this was followed by an outburst of industrial organisation by the workers.

This period also saw the large scale immigration into Liverpool and Lancashire of Irish workers, driven from their country by the ruin of their native cotton industry and by the potato famine. Their English overlords in Ireland had accustomed them to bad conditions of work and squalid living. Now these immigrants to Lancashire formed large pools of cheap, unskilled labour and became a menace to the living standards of the native workers. The city merchants of Merseyside were not slow to take their advantage. Time after time, they have used racial and religious differences to create splits and disunity in the Merseyside Labour Movement, and they have had no small measure of success. Nevertheless, the Irish Catholic workers have played a leading part in building up that Movement, and, especially in times of great struggles, such as the great dock strike of 1911, have stood shoulder to shoulder in unity with their Protestant brothers.

START OF LIVERPOOL CO-OP. MOVEMENT, 1829

It was during this period that the Co-operative movement began to take root in Liverpool with the formation of a society in 1829. Liverpool was in fact the first centre of Co-operative Wholesale Trading. It is interesting to note that in the early stages Robert Owen had a number of major disagreements with the Liverpool pioneers, but these did not prevent him from making his last public appearance in this town in 1885 and it was at the Jubilee Conference here in 1899, forty-one years later, that it was decided to create an adequate memorial to this pioneer.

Thus there has grown up in this locality a strong and well founded Co-operative movement with traditions and experiences of more than one hundred years' development.

15,000 PEOPLE IN QUEEN SQUARE, 1832

Alongside the struggle for industrial organisation, ran the fight for a greater share in political life, but the Reform Act of 1832 gave the franchise only to the new class of factory and property owners. All the workers got out of it was a brutal Poor Law. Out of the struggle against this and against all the intolerable conditions that beset them was born the first great independent political movement of the British working class—Chartism. Above all it was the Lancashire working class which formed the advance guard in the fight for the People's Charter whose six points, if won, would have meant a complete democratisation of the system of Government in Britain. The industrial masses began to call for a new order of society. Monster meetings and demonstrations and great strike actions were carried out by the factory workers in Lancashire and elsewhere. The Merseyside workers, not being primarily factory operatives, but in the main, unskilled or semi-skilled labourers in docks and transport, were not sufficiently well organised to play so conspicuous a part in the struggle for Chartism. Nevertheless we read of a demonstration of 15,000 people in Queen Square, Liverpool, addressed by national and local speakers who were received with enthusiasm by the Merseyside's workers. And when, after a Lancashire and Cheshire Conference held in 1839 the workers formed their

defence organisation, the National Guard, clashes took place between the workers and the police in Liverpool as well as in other towns of Lancashire.

The conditions of the Liverpool workers at this period must have been among the worst in the country. An unskilled proletariat housed in huddled cellars and court-dwellings, a prey to cholera, lived in indescribable squalor and poverty. With this as his background the Chartist Orator, William Jones, at a meeting held in the Queens Theatre, Liverpool, in 1829 welcomed the great Chartist leader Bronterre O'Brien after his release from Lancaster gaol, and in a brilliant, if rather rhetorical speech, condemned a society in which dazzling riches could be flaunted in the face of such extreme misery.

DEMAND FOR NINE HOUR DAY, 1845

The ruling class used all its resources to check the great Chartist movement and aided by divisions among workers and leaders it succeeded. The depression years (1846-48) culminated in a last outburst of activity which finally ended in defeat, but though defeated the working class had not struggled in vain. It had won the 10 hours Bill which Marx described as not only a great practical success but as the victory of a principle. "It was the first time that in broad day light the political economy of the middle (Capitalist) class succumbed to the political economy of the working class."

The year 1848 then, though one of relative defeat for the British working class, registers the close of the first phase of the great national struggle between bourgeois and proletarians. Capitalism was still expanding, it still had much to do, it could still afford to give concessions to some sections of the workers and so stave off the day of its downfall, but that downfall was proclaimed as ultimately inevitable by the publication in 1848 of the Communist Manifesto in which Marx and Engels first put forth a systematic statement of scientific socialism and issued to the labouring masses the call "Working men of all countries, unite!" The history of succeeding years is a history of renewed efforts towards unity by the British workers.

The year 1848 also has its special importance for the workers of Merseyside for it was in that year that there came into existence a body which was later to develop into the Liverpool Trades and Labour Council. In the activity which followed the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1825 the masons, bricklayers and other building workers played a foremost part which laid the foundation of their future industrial organisation. In 1833-4 the building workers of Liverpool, along with those of many other towns, were involved in a series of strikes and lockouts. In 1845 the Liverpool Masons Central Committee took the lead in demanding a nine hour day. In 1848 when the masons of Liverpool were indicted for conspiracy, they received assistance from the newly-formed Liverpool Trades Guardian Association which also assisted workers in other parts of the country in their legal battles against malicious prosecution by the employers. The workers of Liverpool can take an especial pride in the fact that their forefathers led the workers of Britain in setting up a body which seems to have been "the first permanent committee of the nature of a Trades Council" (S. & B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, p. 243).

IMPERIALISM AND LABOUR

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe."

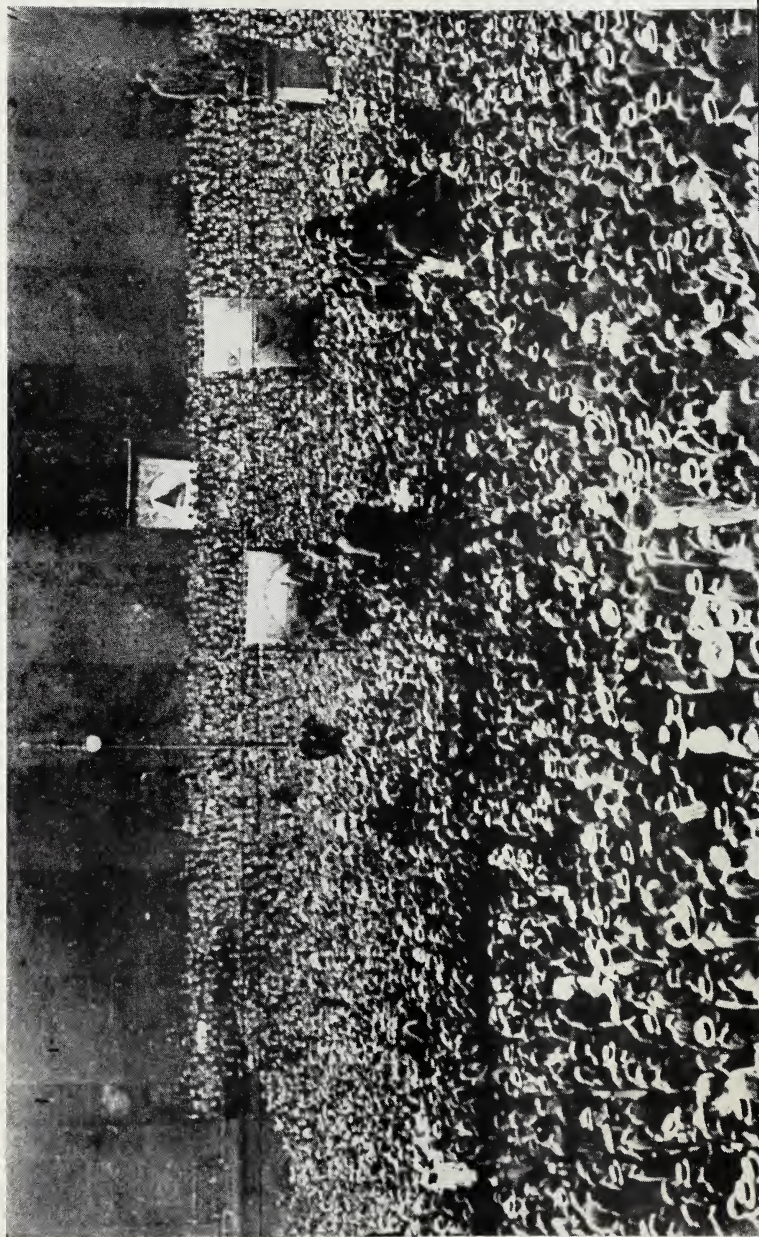
Communist Manifesto, page 5

"Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battle lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers."

Communist Manifesto, page 10



Back Row : J. Bromley, T. Williamson, W. Edwards, W. H. B. Quilliam, A. W. Short, Jas. Connolly, A. G. Williams, R. H. Allen
 Second Row: H. McDonagh, W. H. Jones, Ed. Lamb, J. Cotter, J. Hanratty, G. Milligan, W. Murray, M. McGrath, J. Wood, J. Phipps
 Sitting : F. Kilhelly, T. Chambers, J. Stephenson (Secretary), Tom Mann (President), J. Sexton, T. Ditchfield, P. Kean, P. Casey
 Floor : J. Hesson, R. F. Bell, J. W. Clarke, J. Dickson, J. W. Gardner



During the next 70 years the capitalist system expanded until it enveloped virtually the whole world. Free competition gave way to monopoly. The Merseyside firms of Lever Bros. and Brunner Monds for instance, developed into Unilever Limited and I.C.I., giant combines with world-wide political as well as economic influence. Despite the recurrence of periodic economic crises, monopoly capitalism continued to grow until the various capitalist countries like Britain, the U.S.A., Germany, France, and Japan had divided nearly all the territories and markets of the earth among themselves. By 1900 this process was almost completed, and a period of relative decline set in, during which the imperialist powers organised and launched the first great war for the redivision of their territories and markets. But until, 1900 the British ruling class, holding the foremost place in industrial development and the largest share of world trade and empire could afford, from its super-profits, to make some concessions to the workers, in particular, the skilled craftsmen, in order to divide the workers' movement and win sections of it to support an imperialist policy. The skilled workers built up their "new model" unions, whose slogans was "Defence and not Defiance." These unions were well organised but conservative in outlook. But for all their craft prejudices, they won many important gains, most notable of which was the extension of the franchise to the industrial workers of the towns in 1867.

TOM MANN AND JOHN BURNS, 1889

In Merseyside, there were no spectacular working class developments in the 40 years that followed 1848. The number of unskilled workers increased greatly, work in the port came in feverish rushes, followed each time by a period of enforced idleness. Modern Merseyside begins to take on its characteristic features—in-sufficient factory development, large masses of unskilled labour, intense activity in the port followed by unemployment. By 1889 under the leadership of Tom Mann and John Burns the unskilled workers of Britain had begun to organise their "new unions"—not narrow, craft bodies, but mass organisations covering all the workers, in each industry.

The year 1889 opened with a strike of Merseyside seamen and firemen which was only partially successful in winning wage concessions from the shipowners. But in every large port in the country the dockers were astir. In London a great strike took place and was followed up by a strike of dockers in Liverpool. Conditions on the Liverpool docks at this time, had worsened considerably. Low wages and casual labour prevailed. Owing to the employment of larger and larger numbers of unskilled workers, and to the speed-up caused by feverish rushes of trade, the work became very dangerous. A young docker named James Sexton suffered a terrible accident, caused by a defective hook and an unskilled worker. Bags of grain crashed into him, smashing his face terribly. No ambulances were available for injured workers, so he was left in a shed while his mates went in search of a cab.

WARSHIPS IN MERSEY, 1911

In the next year 1890 the Trade Union Congress was held at Liverpool and Tom Mann and John Burns, leaders of the "new unionism" won the Congress to fight for the 8-hour day. Tom Mann was later to lead one of the greatest struggles ever carried out by the British working class—the dockers strike of 1911. In Liverpool dockers, seamen and transport workers of all kinds came out. Protestant and Irish Catholic workers stood firm together and so strong was their organisation that nothing could come in or out of the port without the permission of the Strikes Committee. The ruling class were alarmed and Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, had soldiers brought in and warships moved into the Mersey; but the workers, led by Tom Mann, defied him. They issued a leaflet written by the Liverpool building worker, Fred Bowers, appealing to the soldiers not to shoot:—

" Men ! Comrades ! Brothers ! You are in the army. So are we. You in the Army of destruction, we in the Army of construction. We work at mine, mill, forge, factory or docks, producing and transporting all the goods, clothing, stuffs, etc., which makes it possible for people to live.

You are the working men's sons.

When we go on strike to better our lot, which is the lot also of your Fathers, Mothers, Brothers and Sisters. You are called upon by your Officers to MURDER US. Don't do it"

The police showed themselves in a role which has become characteristic here. Using their truncheons, they made a brutal attack on a peaceful demonstration on St. George's Plateau and injured hundreds of people. Despite all brutality and threats of repression, the workers stood firm and the strike was concluded in a manner favourable to them. In the next year Tom Mann served six months in Strangeways, because of Fred Bower's anti-militarist leaflet.

The outbreak of the war headed off the rapidly growing militancy of the workers but by the date of its outbreak, the British workers had formed their own political parties, their mass trade unions and their co-operative movement. These resources were to be swung into action in the great struggles of the post-war era.

CAPITALISM IN DECLINE

" Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of productions and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called upon by his spells."

" For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on its trial, each time more threateningly. In these crises, a great part not only of the existing products but also of the previously created productive forces are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity—the epidemic of over-production The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises ? On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces ; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

Communist Manifesto, page 7

" The modern labourer instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society . . . It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him."

Communist Manifesto, page 12

POLICE REBUKED FOR VIOLENCE, 1921

In 1914-18 war showed that capitalism had reached its last phase—its decline. No longer was it able to advance and to offer even its former meagre concessions to the workers. In its place, the scientific socialism propounded by Marx and Engels

began to take visible shape. In 1917 the Russian workers, under the leadership of their Marxist Bolshevik Party overthrew their ruling class and began to build Socialism.—What was the picture in Britain ? “ Whilst the War Government,” says Wal Hannington, “ proclaimed that the soldiers would come back to ‘ a land fit for heroes—a land flowing with milk and honey ’ it prepared for something entirely different ; it prepared for mass unemployment.” In the autumn of 1920 the first post war economic crises broke out. Over a million workers were unemployed, and their numbers rose rapidly. Great demonstrations were held all over the country to demand increased scales of unemployment relief and bitter clashes with the police took place. In 1921 in Liverpool a mass demonstration of the unemployed was suddenly attacked with great brutality by the police. The violence of the latter towards the Hunger Marchers was even commented on by the lately deceased Recorder. “ *The Recorder of Liverpool, from his place on the Bench, publicly rebuked the local police for their violence. The Hunger Marchers themselves were never violent.*” (Cole and Postgate, *The Common Man*, p. 564).

The unrest of this period culminated in the general strike, but the working class under the leadership of the Macdonalds and Thomases, failed to take advantage of their great organised strength and allowed the ruling class to maintain its domination over them. The ruling class showed itself less and less able to cope with the contradictions of its own system, and more and more “ unfit to rule.” The great economic crisis of 1931 saw unemployment again rising rapidly. The employers, aided by the same Macdonald and Thomas made fierce cuts in wages and in the social services. They also began to dismantle the cotton mills and shipyards. In return for a loan from America, they had to promise the capitalists of Wall Street to cut unemployment pay by 10 per cent. By 1933 unemployment had risen to three million. The unemployed fought back against the infamous Means Test, again as in 1921-22, organising huge demonstrations and hunger marches to demand work or full maintenance. In Merseyside, the Police carried terror into the very homes of workers. In Birkenhead demonstrations developed into pitched battles with the Police, whose method of revenge was to raid workers’ dwellings at night, drag workers from their beds beat them up and then cart them off to the Police Station in Black Marias. On one occasion, when a wife and children went to the aid of a husband being batoned during one of these nocturnal raids, the Police shouted, “ Shut up, you Parish fed bastards,” and commenced to baton them, too. Then the Liverpool workers took up the struggle. A great demonstration of 20,000 unemployed marched against the Means Test and here also battles with the Police took place. Because of their part in these struggles, unemployed leaders, Leo McGree and Joe Rawlings were arrested and received terms of imprisonment. Victories had been won. The Birkenhead P.A.C. raised the scale of relief. A great United Front of employed and unemployed workers grew up and in 1934 the cuts in unemployment pay were restored.

The ruling class could not solve the problem of economic crisis except by organising for war. For years it pursued a policy of appeasing and strengthening Fascism in Germany, Italy and Japan in the hope that these countries would attack the Soviet Union, but this plan failed and the people of Britain were plunged into war.

EPILOGUE

“ *What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.*”

Communist Manifesto, page 12

“ *All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self conscious independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority.*”

Communist Manifesto, page 11

MERSEYSIDE'S WAY FORWARD

The war solved no problems for the ruling class, but the international working class won great victories from it. Fascism, the most brutal and reactionary form of capitalism suffered a crushing defeat. The workers and peasants rose to power in many more countries in Eastern Europe and in a large part of China. In 1848 Communism was a spectre that haunted Europe. In 1948 the spectre has changed into hundreds of millions of human beings marching forward to a new civilisation. Their march cannot be stemmed, no matter how the capitalist class of the U.S.A. and Britain assisted by the Right Wing leaders of the Labour Government, rant and rave against them. The Marshall Plan, whose aim, stripped of its philanthropic trappings, is to bring Britain and Western Europe under American domination and to halt the spread of Socialism, promises no good to the people of Merseyside or Britain. Its first effects can be seen in the cuts in the steel allocations for shipbuilding, which will mean a rise in Merseyside's already large number of unemployed. The struggle against the Labour Government's policy of collaboration with Anglo-American imperialism is rising. It was aided by the Merseyside strikes of the seamen and the ship repair workers. It must in this anniversary year of 1948 be intensified until the Ministers who are responsible for Merseyside's unemployment, for high prices, and lack of houses, as well as for the murders in Greece and the bloodshed in Palestine are driven from office and replaced by a real Labour Government. Thus can the people take a step further along the road to socialism whose scientific principles were first enunciated by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto of 1848.

(Page numbers noted against quotations from the Communist Manifesto refer to the 1948 Centenary Edition).

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